

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20

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EUR-12 OES-09 DLOS-09 SMS-01 ACDA-12 /149 W

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R 280155Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7821

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, EEWT, PLOS, FJ

SUBJECT: SUVA HIGHLIGHTS

1. PRESS FREEDOM - THE LEAKAGE OF AN INTERNAL MEMORANDUM ABOUT DRINKING DURING DUTY HOURS WHICH HAD BEEN CIRCULATED IN MINISTRY OF FIJIAN AFFAIRS SET OFF A CONTROVERSY ABOUT PRESS FREEDOM AND ELICITED A STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER RATU MARA. THE MEMO WAS PRINTED IN THE FIJI SUN AND LATER COMMENTED UPON BY DEPUTY PRIMEMINISTER RATU PENAIA DURING A SESSION OF PARLIAMENT. RATU PENAIA SAID THE SUN "BY ITS STYLE OF JOURNALISM CLEARLY RIDICULTED AND PERVERTED THE GOOD SENSE OF THAT CIRCULAR, AS IF TO PUBLICLY SCORN THE INTENTION OF GOVERNMENT IN THE PROPER CONDUCT OF ITS OWN AFFAIRS." PENAIA WENT ON TO CRITICIZE THE SUN FOR THRIVING ON HALF-TRUTHS AND SENSATIONAL REPORTING AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PUBLIC. HE SUGGESTED "APPROPRIATE ACTION" MIGHT HAVE TO BE TAKEN AGAINST THE SUN.

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2. PENAIA'S REMARKS PROMPTED VARIOUS RESPONSES, AMONG WHICH WAS PIECE BY RESPECTED ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF FIJI TIMES CALLING FOR RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM BUT MORE OPENNESS ON PART OF PACIFIC ISLAND POLITICANS. RATU MARA'S VIEWS ON RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM COINCIDED WITH COMMENT BY TIMES EDITOR THAT JOURNALISTS "WILL HAVE TO DEVELOP A STYLE OF OPERATION THAT SEES ALL

THE NEWS, GOOD AND BAD, GET INTO PRINT, YET MAKING SOME ALLOWANCES FOR PACIFIC ISLAND SENSIBILITIES". PRIME MINISTER STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT PRESS HAS ROLE TO PLAY IN A COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT; WAY IN WHICH PRESS PRESENTS ITS NEWS OR COMMENTS AFFECTS WHETHER CHANGE IS ORDERLY OR DISRUPTIVE.

3. PRC TRADE SHOW - FIJI'S GOVERNOR-GENERAL RATU SIR GEORGE CAKOBAU OPENED 10-DAY CHINESE TRADE FAIR ON AUG 22 CALLING FAIR OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE TRADE BETWEEN FIJI AND PRC. MORE THAN 1500 DIFFERENT PRODUCTS WERE TEATEFULLY DISPLAYED, AND FAIR ELICITED WHAT APPEARED TO BE FAVORABLE RESPONSE FROM LOCAL BUSINESSMEN AS WELL AS PUBLIC VIEWERS. PRODUCTS WHICH RANGED FROM FOODSTUFFS TO SMALL APPLIANCES, HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND CLOTHING WERE WELL PACKAGED BUT OF VARYING QUALITY. EVEN ITEMS OF POOR QUALITY SHOULD NEVERTHELESS BE COMPETITIVE WITH GOODS AVAILABLE LOCALLY IF PRICES ARE AT ALL REASONABLE. CHINESE OFFICIALS TOLD EMBOFF ORDERS WOULD TAKE 4 TO 6 MONTHS TO FILL DEPENDING UPON SUPPLIES IN HONG KONG WARHOUSES. LOCAL CHINESE WERE IN LARGE ATTENDANCE AND LOCAL CHINESE STUDENTS WITH KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH AND MANDARIAN ACTED AS INTERPRETERS.

4. PRC ASKED TO JOIN SUVA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE- AFTER WHAT WAS REPORTEDLY A LIVELY DEBATE, SUVA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DURING ITS AUG MONTHLY MEETING DECIDED TO INCLUDE CHINESE EMBASSY AMONG ITS EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS. RESPONDING TO INQUIRY UNCLASSIFIED

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FROM PRESS, PRC EMBOFF STATED HE WAS UNAWARE OF CHAMBER ACTION AND HAD NOT RECEIVED INVITATION TO JOIN.

5. FIJI'S 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONE - ACCORDING TO PRESS, PRIME MINISTER RATU MARA ON AUG 20 TOLD PARLIAMENT FIJI WOULD HAVE TO WORK OUT BOUNDARY PROBLEMS WITH TONGA, THE SOLOMONS, NEW HEBRIDES, TUVALU, WALLIS AND FUTUNA AND NEW CALEDONIA BEFORE PROCLAIMING A 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONE. RATU MARA SAID SOVIETS HAD SEVERAL YEARS AGO OFFERED TO SURVEY AREA, BUT THEIR WORK HAD NOT BEEN VERY USEFUL. AFTER THREE YEARS OF REPEATED ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN SOVIET REPORT, FIJI HAD RECEIVED COPY IN RUSSIAN WHICH HAD THEN TAKEN TWO YEARS TO TRANSLATE, AND FINDINGS HAD NOT BEEN INFORMATIVE. HOUSE OF SAME DAY APPROVED BILL PROPOSED BY PRIME MINISTER WHICH CREATED AN ARCHIPELAGIC BOUNDARY AROUND THE ROTUMA GROUP OF ISLANDS MAKING AREA PART OF FIJI TERRITORY. ECONOMIC ZONE IS INTENDED TO EXTEND FROM THIS BOUNDARY WHICH WOULD CONFLICT WITH ZONES OF NEIGHBORS. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS TOWARDS AGREEMENT ON MEDIAN LINES BETWEEN BOUNDARIES HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN STARTED BY AMB AT LARGE JOSUA RABUKAWAQA.

6. FIJI PLANS COMMERCIAL RADIO STATION - MINISTER OF INFOR-

MATION TOLD HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 16 AUG GOVT IS CONSIDERING ALLOWING COMMERCIAL RADIO STATION TO OPERATE IN FIJI. FIJI BROADCASTING COMMISSION (FBC) HAS COME UNDER CRITICISM BY OPPOSITION PARTIES FOR CARRYING TOO MANY ADVERTISEMENTS IN ITS HINDI PROGRAMMING AND BEING TOO PRO-GOVT. FIJI TIMES REPORTED THAT GROUP OF INVESTORS HEADED BY AMERICAN ACTOR RAYMOND BURR HAD ABOUT 18 MONTHS AGO SHOWN INTEREST IN OBTAINING LICENSE FOR COMMERCIAL STATION, BUT HAD EVENTUALLY DROPPED IDEA. ACCORDING TO RATU WILLIAM, FBC EARNS ABOUT F\$1 MILLION PER YEAR ON ADVERTISING AND WOULD HAVE TO BECOME FULLY GOVT SUPPORTED IF IT LOST THIS REVENUE. FREEING FBC OF ADVERTISING WOULD, HOWEVER, ALLOW FOR IMPROVED PROGRAMMING, AND DISCUSSIONS OF PROPOSAL ARE UNDERWAY.

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7. PLANS MOVE AHEAD FOR SIXTH SOUTH PACIFIC GAMES -- FIJI'S ORGANIZERS OF THE SIXTH SOUTH PACIFIC GAMES TO TAKE PLACE NEXT YEAR IN SUVA HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY ATTEMPTING TO RAISE \$100,000 OF THE \$300,000 NEEDED TO SPONSOR THE EVENT. GAMES COMMITTEE HAS ORGANIZED LOTTERY AND FORMED COMPANY WHICH WILL BE EXCLUSIVE MANUFACTURERS OF EMBLEMS AND SOUVENIR ITEMS. COMMITTEE IS ALSO NEGOTIATING WITH HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS TO STAGE FUND RAISING SHOW. MEANWHILE, DESPITE WEATHER PROBLEMS AND EQUIPMENTS DELAYS, SUVA'S NEW STADIUM AT BUCKHURST PARK IS SITE OF ACTIVE CONSTRUCTION, AND BUILDERS SAY IT IS UP TO SCHEDULE.
STILLMAN

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